



## ***Darwin – Carolyn Carttling***

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**Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin**

**Speaker: Carolyn Carttling**

Carolyn Carttling: Yes, my name's Carolyn Carttling, I'm just appearing as an individual.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you. Yes, when you're ready.

Carolyn Carttling: I'd like to talk to you about two topics this afternoon. Firstly, the damage that fracking would cause to the rich and complex and unique and very valuable ecosystems in the Northern Territory, were it to be done.

Aboriginal people make up the majority of the resident population in the shale gas basins in the Northern Territory. And they're strongly opposed to fracking taking place on their land. The Beetaloo sub-basin is the largest of these, and representatives of these people have raised serious objections to fracking. Their songlines are carried through both the underground and surface waterways of all this country. And they're a crucial part of their culture.

The whole region is a wetland, and it has annual monsoonal flooding, and pollution of this area that would be caused by flooding and leakage of water contaminated by the chemicals used in fracking would cause serious permanent damage. The water, soil, and all the wildlife, such as the hundreds of bird species that use places like Lake Woods for important breeding sites and migration stopovers, would be destroyed.

There are very many rare and threatened species of birds and animals in the Beetaloo sub-basin, and important plants for the aboriginal people. And it's also a very valuable region for tourism in the Northern Territory. And a lot of interest from international visitors. And something the aboriginal people could be involved in. There'd be local, long-term jobs, and opportunities for aboriginal people into the future, not just finishing when wells are decommissioned or abandoned. An industry for these people.

I'm also concerned about the abandoned wells, and the impossibility of adequate long-lasting monitoring of them. The Victorian report into the inquiry into fracking mentions concerns raised by the New South Wales Chief Scientist and Engineer, Professor Mary O'Kane, saying that active wells would be subject to monitoring programmes, but there's very little research on well integrity on long-term abandoned wells. The Victorian report



mentions the risks of fractures extending to connect with aquifers, and contaminating water resources with methane and chemical compounds, and spills when flowback to the surface occurs.

And I'll tell you the next bit in a minute.

Hon. Justice Pepper: That's all right.

Carolyn Carttling: Yeah, so, the fracking inquiry and the Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, have to listen to these, and all the other very great concerns raised by a majority of the Northern Territory population, and ban fracking for the long-term safety of our unique and special environment, and all Territorians into the future. Thank you.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you very much. Are there any questions?

I may just make just a quick comment, and I'm glad you raise Professor Mary O'Kane, who's the Chief Scientist of New South Wales, report. They, I can assure you they have been looked at, and indeed they are referenced in the draft final report that we handed down in December. She had much valuable information contained in those reports. We've also looked at reports from Victoria, and other jurisdictions around Australia and overseas, like the United Kingdom, Canada, and various provinces in Canada as well.

Carolyn Carttling: About abandoned wells?

Hon. Justice Pepper: Amongst other things, amongst other things, yes. Doctor Jones does have a question, yes.

Dr. David Jones: I heard you make mention, I'm not sure whether you're referring to the Beetaloo Basin specifically in this context, but you mention that it's an important region for tourism in the NT. Would you care to elaborate on that, and particularly in the context of what you view the sustainable employment prospects might be, because that's obviously a key socio-economic concern.

Carolyn Carttling: Yes, well, if the natural environment is preserved, and protected, there's a lot of interest. There's already a lot of interest from international visitors coming to the Territory, and to those areas, not just in Katherine, at Kakadu National Park, but other areas, as well.

Dr. David Jones: What do you think are the attractions? Is it like woods, or the Long Reach Lagoon and those places, with lots of birds?

Carolyn Carttling: Yes, yes, that's certainly a part of it. And there are unique animal species that are threatened, many of them, through that area. And just very, very special environment, with the wetlands, and in dry season as well. Very special sort of tourism, where people might be going out camping, perhaps, taken with aboriginal guides. And hearing about their knowledge, you know, their knowledge long-term of that country and their stories, you know. Their songlines and special, unique stories that the aboriginal people have got.



Dr. David Jones: Thank you.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Any further questions? Again, thank you very much for coming, Mrs. Carttling, today, and giving up your time and speaking to the inquiry. It's very much appreciated. If you are reading from a written document, and you want that written document to be a formal submission to the inquiry, perhaps you could just leave a copy with one of the members of the task force, just to one side there, and we'll make sure that's put up on the website.

Carolyn Carttling: Yes, all right. Thank you. I'm doing a submission as well, which I haven't forwarded yet. Yes, these are just brief notes, I could certainly type it up and bring it in later.

Hon. Justice Pepper: If you're already doing a submission, that's fine, I would urge you to get that submission in as soon as you possibly can.

Carolyn Carttling: Yes, certainly.

Hon. Justice Pepper: Thank you.

Carolyn Carttling: Okay, thank you.